

**SR 20 Sharpe's Corner to SR 536**  
**Technical Advisory Committee**  
**MEETING NOTES**  
**Meeting Focus: Review of Alternatives**

**February 21, 2002, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**  
**Skagit Public Utility District, Aqua Room**

**Prepared By Jack Graham**

<b>Attendance</b>
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**Technical Advisory Committee**

Nan Fullmer, Fidalgo Country Inn, Inc./Associated Management, Inc.  
Stoney Bird, Citizen  
Kelly Craig, WSDOE  
Norman Dahlstedt, Dahlstedt Family Properties  
Sharon Feldman, CH2M Hill  
John Fenedick, CH2M Hill  
Ann Marie Gutwein, Skagit County Public Works  
Todd Harrison, WSDOT  
Elizabeth Healy, FHWA

Kirk Johnson, Skagit County  
Eric Johnston, City of Oak Harbor  
Kelley Moldstadt, Skagit Sub-RTPO  
Don Munks, Skagit County Commissioner  
Marsha Tolon, WSDOT  
Tim Walters, Equilon Puget Sound Refining Company  
Dick Wilson, Port of Skagit County

**Guests**

Jack Graham, WSDOT

Materials presented to the Committee during the meeting included:

1. *SR 20 Committee Meeting Agenda for February 21, 2002*
2. *Draft SR 20 Sharpe's Corner to SR 536 Technical Advisory Committee Meeting #2 Notes for November 29, 2001*
3. *SR 20 Sharpe's Corner to SR 536 Project Management Team Meeting Notes, January 28, 2002*
4. *Packet: SR-20 Sharpe's Corner to SR 536 NEPA Pilot Project 11" x 17" Drawings: (3A) Boulevard – Low Speed (Figure Index, 16 drawings)*
5. *Packet: SR-20 Sharpe's Corner to SR 536 NEPA Pilot Project 11" x 17" Drawings: (2B/2C) High Speed Throughway Corridor with HOV/G.P. Lanes (Figure Index, 17 drawings)*

Additional materials available to the participants at the meeting included:

6. *Aerial-View Maps of the SR 20 Sharpe's Corner to SR 536 Corridor (4 pieces)*
7. *Roll Plots (wall hanging) of SR 20 Sharpe's Corner to SR 536 Corridor (2 pieces)*

*Should any member that was not at the meeting wish to obtain any of these materials please contact Marsha Tolon, ([tolonm@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:tolonm@wsdot.wa.gov)).*

<b>1. Introductions and Meeting Objectives</b>
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Marsha Tolon opened the meeting at 9:05 am. The members present stood and introduced themselves for the benefit of any newcomers.

<b>2. Project Schedule and Status</b>
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Marsha announced that the screening of alternatives will take place at the next TAC Meeting. She proposed that there be no March TAC Meeting, but that the next one be held April 18th.

She said that two Policy Board Meetings have been scheduled: The March 28<sup>th</sup> meeting will be skipped, but the April 29<sup>th</sup> meeting will be held.

### 3. Review of Alternatives

John Fenedick first reviewed the alternatives as they stand currently:

**Alternative 1: No Action** No discussion regarding this option was necessary.

**Alternative 2A: High Speed Throughway Corridor-** This alternative primary involves Safety improvements, such as median closures and grade separations, without additional widening. The posted speed limit would be 50 (or possibly 55 mph) from Sharpe's Corner to the Berentson Bridge. East of the Berentson Bridge the posted speed limit would be 60 mph due to it being an approach to the Interstate 5 Corridor. Alternative 2A includes 6 lanes; the additional lane is a HOV lane.

**Alternative 2B: High Speed Throughway Corridor** - This is similar to Alternative 2A, but it involves widening of the highway, including widening of the Berentson Bridge. Alternative 2B includes 6 lanes; the additional lane is a general-purpose lane.

**Alternative 2C: High Speed Throughway Corridor-** This similar alternative (to 2A and 2B) includes HOV and general purpose lanes in each direction.

**Alternative 3A: Boulevard Concept** - This is a low-speed boulevard concept. Near Sharpe's Corner and to the east of the Berentson Bridge, this alternative provides for a 40 or 45 mph posted speed limit, which is lower than the present speed. Its design includes an additional, slightly narrower lane, and could have sidewalk areas and landscaping in conformance with the City of Anacortes, giving the driver the appearance that he or she is entering a city. East of the Berentson Bridge there would be widening only for the an improved pedestrian/bike path to bring it up to current WSDOT standards, and the posted speed limit would be approximately 50 mph. Traveling eastward from Sharpe's Corner there would be a transition from a city-type boulevard to a slightly higher speed boulevard to an interstate transition with even higher design and posted speeds.

**Alternative 3B: Boulevard Concept** - In this alternative the boulevard would extend east of the Berentson Bridge. It is a boulevard, but it includes a transition to Interstate 5.

Todd Harrison stated that the plan is to rebuild from the interchange at Memorial Highway (SR 536) east to Interstate 5. He pointed out that our primary goal along the SR 20 Sharpe's Corner to SR 536 Corridor is Safety, but future Capacity is also a consideration. It is also prudent to remember that people sometimes choose an alternate route instead of SR 20, and this lessens the flow along that route.

Elizabeth Healy thought it strange to start the HOV lanes at Interstate 5 and not carry them all the way to Sharpe's Corner.

John said that comments regarding these alternatives will be welcomed over the next month.

John then presented the packets *SR-20 Sharpe's Corner to SR 536 NEPA Pilot Project 11" x 17" Drawings: (2B/2C) High Speed Throughway Corridor with HOV/G.P. Lanes* and *SR-20 Sharpe's Corner to SR 536 NEPA Pilot Project 11" x 17" Drawings: (3A) Boulevard – Low Speed*.

The purpose of presenting these packets was to enable the members of the Committee to view and evaluate various segments of the Corridor as they are presented within the different alternatives being considered. It is important to recognize that this is a "work in progress", and that some of the details and locations, of bike and pedestrian pathways, of intersections, overpasses, etc., are not meant to be the final solution to any particular challenge. They are meant to be ideas to can stimulate further thought, discussion, and even new solutions.

John stated that there are some additional options, particularly at the Thompson Road interchange, which were presented to the representatives of the refinery at a meeting with them, which are not incorporated into these two packets. He said that he had a few schematic diagrams which could be discussed after the group had reviewed the two packets.

*SR-20 Sharpe's Corner to SR 536 NEPA Pilot Project 11" x 17" Drawings: (2B/2C) High Speed Throughway Corridor with HOV/G.P. Lanes:*

Alternatives 2B and 2C have the exact same footprint. These are the two workable options at Sharpe's Corner. There are then as many as 6 options at Thompson Road, but the only two included in this packet are Figures 1.1 and 1.2. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 are the two included options, which encompass March Point Road and Thompson Road. The rest of the Figures each only have one option per section of the highway. As you read the following discussion, please refer to the drawings themselves to gain a more complete understanding.

**Figure 1.1 - Flyover Ramp to Whidbey Island at Sharpe's Corner** This flyover ramp flows from westbound SR 20 to southbound SR 20 to Whidbey Island. It is the most difficult area along the whole Corridor to design for. To the north are the tide flats and rock outcroppings. There is a relatively narrow Right of Way there through which to run a highway between a hotel on the west and the business to the east. Its posted speed limit would be 25 mph; the design speed would be 30 mph. Putting this flyover ramp at Sharpe's Road is the least expensive, most practical solution and best location of all the possibilities considered thus far, especially when impacts to the surrounding community are considered, though this design needs to be fine tuned. This design, pictured in Figure 1.1, meets WSDOT design standards, but whether or not it will pass traffic analysis is suspect. Providing local access for businesses at this location is an important factor in any such design, and any design considered will be a compromise of many factors.

The bike/pedestrian overcrossing pictured on Figure 1.1 is a general representation of what may be designed, and not yet a fully thought out design. What was important here was to include it so as to show a commitment to including this element in any design.

**Figure 1.2 'T' Ramp Intersection at Sharpe's Corner** - This option allows a stop-controlled access. It is grade separated so that people traveling along SR 20 to and from Anacortes are not impeded. The left-turn time from westbound SR 20 to the Whidbey Island cutoff is improved so that there is more time to make a left. (The only time the light is triggered is when someone wants to make this left. The westbound traffic may back up somewhat toward Christiansen Road but not as much as it does presently.) The northbound left-hand turn to westbound to Anacortes action is similar to what is available today; it is an elevated intersection.

Getting into the businesses may be difficult with this option, similar to Figure 1.1.

**Figure 2 Christiansen Road/March Point Road Intersection** - The bike/pedestrian path along the westbound lanes would travel right next to the high-speed traffic with this alternative, but this would be difficult to avoid (along the north side) due to the steep slope down to the tidal flats in that area. The bike/pedestrian overcrossing can be located no further west than it is; it could be shifted further to the east.

**Figure 3.1 Undercrossing Between March Point Road/Christiansen Road and Jessie Thompson Road** - The local street system provides access to this undercrossing to the east of March Point Road; it connects to Summit Park Road on the south side and South March Point Road to the north. At Thompson Road there is right in/right out access to SR 20 from both the north and the south; the medians are closed.

**Figure 3.2 Grade Separated Interchange at Thompson Road** - This would mean a complete reconstruction of Thompson Road with at-grade ramps. With all the impacts to surrounding properties, this is not really a viable option. Further ideas at Thompson Road were discussed with the refinery people and others, but there has not been time to develop these options.

The remaining figures 4 through 15 are relatively simple and straightforward. All they indicate is additional width for the additional capacity lanes, and acceleration/deceleration lanes through some of the intersections.

**Figure 4 General Widening Continuing Eastward from Jessie Thompson Road** - This drawing was not discussed at this meeting.

**Figure 5 Median Closure at Reservation Road** - What has been proposed is a grade separation via the existing bridge (actually a widened existing bridge) east of Reservation Road. The most efficient connection in terms of cost is to take the connection all the way to Padilla Road (misabeled 'Stevenson Road' on this drawing).

**Figure 6 Acceleration/Deceleration Lanes Approaching the East March Point Road and Padilla Road Intersection** - There would be a median closure to enhance Safety.

**Figure 7 March Point Road and Padilla Road Intersection East Toward the Berentson Bridge** - Getting around at the March Point Road/Padilla Road intersection is a bit circuitous, but it is much safer than the present-day configuration. To the east of the intersection this location utilizes some of the improvements already planned by the Swinomish Tribe.

**Figure 8 Berentson Bridge East** - This alternative provides for widening of the bridge structure for additional lanes and bike/pedestrian paths.

**Figure 9 Berentson Bridge Widening Continuing East** - Right of Way constraints begin to be a factor here. The bike/pedestrian path becomes separated from the highway to the west in this drawing.

**Figure 10 SR 20 Widening: Continuing East** - The entire corridor, including the bike/pedestrian path, must be brought together due to railway right of way.

An option would be for the bike/pedestrian path cross SR 20 at the east side of the Berentson Bridge and for it to travel along the south side of the roadway east.

**Figure 11 SR 20 Widening: Continuing East** - This drawing continues the widening and improved bike/pedestrian path eastward.

**Figure 12 Bay-View Edison Overpass** - Bay-View Edison Road would cross over SR 20 and connect with existing county roads south of SR 20. This option could be deleted, money saved, and the rest of the corridor left intact, without endangering the effectiveness of the corridor as a whole, according to John.

**Figure 13 SR 20 Widening: Continuing East** - This section includes simple widening of the roadway.

**Figure 14 Best Road Intersection** - This drawing illustrates an underpass to the west of Best Road, with a median closure at Best Road itself. The overcrossing west of Best Road makes the crossing more circuitous, but it does not occur right at the current intersection in order to help keep costs down. There would be median closure from both north and south at Best Road itself; this would eliminate the stoplight at this intersection. That helps avoid the traffic, which comes from the nearby junction of WR 536 with SR 20. A criticism of this method of crossing SR 20 is that Ovenell Road would become very busy.

**Figure 15 Flyover Ramp from SR 536 to Westbound SR 20** - This requires coordination with the Fredonia Project. Right now not all assumptions are correct; Randy Simonsen's office is being consulted in this regard.

Dick Wilson brought up a counter proposal. In it, SR 536 would cross over SR 20 and meet up directly with Farm to Market Road. There would be complications here due to having to cross SR 20 at a skewed angle. Also, to cross the railroad would require this segment of SR 536 to be very high as it crosses the railroad.

The group took a break from 10:40 to 10:55 am.

#### 4. Continue Review of Alternatives

After the break John went through the low-speed packet.

##### *SR-20 Sharpe's Corner to SR 536 NEPA Pilot Project 11" x 17" Drawings: (3A) Boulevard – Low Speed:*

The Low-Speed Boulevard option has fewer local-access and limited-access issues. It would be, in many respects, similar to SR 20 as it stands now. This option would include an additional lane. The lanes would be slightly narrower, and the speeds would be slightly slower, with a posted speed of about 45 mph, west of the Berentson Bridge. East of the Berentson Bridge, the speeds would remain higher. If our project lowers the speed limits along the Corridor, the City of Anacortes would consider doing the same along its portion of the highway. The Low-Speed Boulevard option would include a few more signalized intersections, the addition of right-turn pockets, acceleration lanes, and similar improved safety features.

**Figure 1.1 Additional Westbound to Southbound Left-Turn Lane at Sharpe's Corner** - Dick Wilson pointed out that, as the roadway heads south toward Whidbey Island from the intersection at Sharpe's Corner, there is a need to keep a second truck lane if a second lane is added, as otherwise the slow trucks heading up the hill would bottleneck traffic. John Fenedick pointed out that there is a risk that autos would race each other up the hill.

John and Todd Harrison said that at the intersection this option would increase the capacity of left-turn movement without increasing the green time. The current use of the shoulder by RV's and slower trucks would be replaced until the merge created by this option by a sharing of the right lane between the RV's, slower trucks, and other vehicles. After that, there would be one southbound lane and then the slower trucks riding the shoulder as they currently do.

##### **Figure 1.2 Extended Left-Turn Lane from Westbound SR 20 to the Southbound Spur at Sharpe's Corner** -

The existing left-turn lane at that location is about 1,000 or 1,100 feet long, which is already quite lengthy. This option could extend it even another 1,000 feet. It would become an add-drop lane (rather than a left-turn lane), and it wouldn't really be an acceptable option, as things stand. The temptation for drivers coming off the green light at March Point/Christiansen Road would be to vie for position in the extended left-turn lane, due to their proximity to one another.

Stoney Bird asked if a flyover ramp had been considered as part of this alternative, as in Figure 1.1 of the high-speed options above. He asked what the chances are that this could be considered. Sharon Feldman replied that there would most likely be some mixing and matching of alternatives once the modeling was completed. Todd Harrison to flag this as an alternative in the notes. It needs to be considered. Another important consideration is what the roadway from Sharpe's Corner to Anacortes needs to be considered; it was determined that we would follow up with the City of Anacortes to discover its plans for that particular segment of highway.

Alternative 3B has an at-grade roadway west to southbound. Option 2 has a grade-separated ramp. Option 3 offers a grade-separated interchange.

**Figure 2 March Point Road/Christiansen Road Intersection Signalized** - This intersection is already signalized, but, under this low-speed alternative, it would have right-turn pockets and acceleration/deceleration lanes. These acceleration and deceleration lanes can double as bus stops and bus turnouts. East of March Point Road the bike/pedestrian path becomes separated from the main roadway.

**Figure 3 Jessie Thompson Road Intersection Signalized** - This intersection will be signalized. The Safety comes from a combination of the lower speed limit and the acceleration and deceleration lanes.

Mike Morton suggested that there be no at-grade bike/pedestrian crossings in the low-speed scenario, but that there be overpasses, as with the high-speed alternative.

**Figure 4 Continued Widening Eastward** - This drawing includes no intersections. It continues the widening of SR 20, with an additional vehicle lane.

**Figure 5 Reservation Road Intersection** - Right-turn pockets, acceleration and deceleration lanes, and pedestrian treatments are part of this drawing.

**Figure 6 Eastward Continued Widening** - Widening continues as the highway moves to the east.

**Figure 7 Swinomish Tribal Improvements to the East of March Point Road/Padilla Road** - There is still a median closure at the intersection.

**Figure 8 Widening of the Bike Path on the Berentson Bridge** - This is an improvement of the bike path that already exists.

**Figure 9 Separated Bike Path Continuing Eastward** - The bike/pedestrian path is briefly separated from SR 20.

**Figure 10 Eastward Continued Widening** - This section of roadway continues the pattern of road widening, with an additional vehicle lane. The bike/pedestrian pathway has rejoined SR 20.

**Figure 11 Eastward Continued Widening** - This drawing continues the pattern of change found in Figure 10.

**Figure 12 Bay-View Edison Road/ La Conner Whitney Road Intersection Eastward** - This section continues the widening, and the intersection is signalized.

**Figure 13 Continued Eastward Widening** - This drawing demonstrates the simple widening as SR 20 continues eastward.

**Figure 14 Pedestrian Overcrossing at Best Road** - The pedestrian overcrossing is provided here because of the higher posted speed limits east of the Berentson Bridge.

**Figure 15 SR 20/SR 536 Interchange, and the Link to the Fredonia/I-5 Project** - There is a need here to more accurate information before being able to adequately link up with the Fredonia/I-5 Project.

There were several opinions given about bike lanes as SR 20 headed east from SR 536 to I-5. Todd Harrison said that bikes would be able to ride on a 6 or 8-foot shoulder, but his preference would be for bikes to utilize other, less traveled, local roads.

The point was made that on the low-speed boulevard people would tend to drive too fast, seeing that people are really looking to use the SR 20 corridor as a throughway. Todd Harrison agreed and thought that the traffic modeling would show these things and produce negative numbers. In that case it would not go to the Policy Board. Mike Morton added that 50% of the traffic consists of commuters; 50% is passing through. 17% is shoppers but at other places outside the corridor. Most people see this roadway as a way to get through to I-5.

Dick Wilson said that, in his opinion, at least the section of SR 20 east of the Berentson Bridge should be high-speed corridor, though it may be desirable to include some grade separations west of the bridge. That would be best for business interests, and as RV's and trucks get larger, the low-speed option would become a problematic solution, with its narrow lanes, etc.

## **5. Alternative Screening Process and Weighting**

Sharon Feldman said that the traffic modeler was completing the calibration of the model today. It has been decided that a few more traffic counts will be done at certain intersections within the next week and that data will be built into the models. The next step is to do screening, using the 6 categories of screening criteria developed by the Steering Committee. At the next meeting of the TAC, the results of the screening will be presented to the TAC; each alternative will be ranked for each of the 6 categories of criteria.

## **6. General Comments and Next Steps**

For Next Steps, please look back at Section 2, "Policy Schedule and Status".

## **7. Plus / Delta**

Stoney Bird made a brief presentation of a website of a satellite telecast recently shown at the Skagit County Public Health Department postulating the bad effects on health of sprawl and the associated use of automobiles. The website: [www.publichealthgrandrounds.unc.edu](http://www.publichealthgrandrounds.unc.edu)

Marsha Tolon adjourned the meeting at 12:00 pm.